

From:
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Subject:

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Thursday, October 16, 2003 8:11 AM
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Hague Comments

Hello, my name is Linda Donovan and I am an adoptive parent of a beautiful son from Guatemala. My husband and I adopted our son in December of 2002. I am a psychotherapist and the reason I mention this is that I am quite familiar with attachment and bonding issues which I will address in this e-mail. First, I would like to tell you how much our son has made our lives complete. We were childless with unexplained infertility and we looked to adoption. The foster care system in this country is in a terrible state of crisis as far as I am concerned. Biological parents are given chance after chance to parent their biological children with, in many cases, little change. Oftentimes, by the time these children are relinquished for adoption they have been severely traumatized and may have severe special needs including problems attaching to their adoptive families. Because of our desire to parent an infant and our concern about the children coming out of the foster care system, we turned to international adoption and ultimately chose Guatemala as the children there are in foster care settings which allow them to build strong attachments with their caregivers. We went through an up and down process to adopt our son for 13 months, and yes, we faced delays and some hardships, but overall, I would say the process had some benefits. Our child had a DNA test with his birthmother to prove she was giving up her own child and we have since made contact with his birthmother and she is pleased that her adoption plan for her son has led him into our lives. The Hague Treaty concerns me on many many levels, and its drawbacks can be seen clearly in the attempts to implement it recently on March 5th 2003 in Guatemala. Effectively, it brought adoptions there to a grinding halt until it was declared unconstitutional by the Guatemalan congress. Meanwhile thousands of children who were in orphanages and foster care languished, denied the basic right to a family, and the families that waited for them suffered mightily. I cannot stress enough how concerned I am about the passage of this treaty. As seen in Guatemala, I fear that it will dramatically lengthen the amount of time that children and adoptive parents wait to become families; a very critical period of time where children need to attach and bond to their parents. I fear that the Hague will only add more bureaucratic procedures to an already lengthy process while accomplishing little of its stated mandate. Let's be honest, no matter how many rules are put in place, corruptions will always, sadly, exist. The Hague will not be able to eradicate it any more than we have been able to eradicate it in other areas of our own country. Another concern is that the Hague, as it is currently written will put severe hardships on the smaller agencies and that is a big concern. We used a big agency for our son's adoption and I would never do that again. There was little personalized service, an inability to get questions answered or concerns met. I actually got most of my help through the smaller agencies who were more personalized, even though I wasn't paying them! I fear that this treaty will actually cause a monopoly on adoption services, as larger agencies can more easily meet the compliance issues than the smaller due to their greater financial resources. This will leave little choice for adoptive parents. It is crucial that adoptive parents, when thinking about a major decision about whom to trust with \$25,000 have the choices they so deserve in order to work with people with whom they feel comfortable and confident. Lastly, I feel the Hague will only increase fees for the adoptive parents, which are already very prohibitive for many many families. With children dying every day of poverty, do we really want to make this process any harder or out of reach

for the average American family? The Hague, while good in theory, will not be implemented to the effects hoped for. Legislation may be needed, but it should be devised with significant input from adoption professionals and parents in order for it to truly reach its goal of providing for the children. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Very Truly Yours, Linda Donovan

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